

DIVERSITY NEWS

March 2007

Yvonne: The Department of Veterans Affairs strategic plan includes the objective to... “recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce...[a workforce] that provides high-quality service to veterans and their families.”

Thomas: Strategies to ATTAIN that objective include:

... improving strategic management of human resources,

... promoting workforce diversity,

... instilling a results-oriented performance culture,

... and ensuring that employees and managers understand the characteristics of a healthy work environment.

Yvonne: One way of measuring PROGRESS along the path to success... is by examining the results of employee SURVEYS—surveys that measure employee ENGAGEMENT as well as employee SATISFACTION.

Thomas: In THIS edition of Diversity News, we'll take a look at ONE such survey: the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey.

Yvonne: The Federal Human Capital Survey measures Federal employees' perceptions about how effectively their agency's workforce is managed... AND whether conditions that sustain employee COMMITMENT are present.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) first conducted the Federal Human Capital Survey in 2002. OPM conducted the survey again in 2004, and then again in 2006. OPM intends to continue administering the survey every two years.

Many of the questions that are on the Federal Human Capital Survey will ALSO be used on the Federal Government's Annual Employee Survey, which agencies are required to conduct... beginning in 2007.

The Federal Human Capital Survey is divided into eight sections:

Personal work experience...

Recruitment, development, and retention...

Performance culture...

Leadership...

Learning (and knowledge management) ...

Job satisfaction...

Satisfaction with benefits...

And demographics.

Thomas: The FIRST ten items on the survey address employees' personal work experiences... their opinions about their work units... and their opinions about their organization overall.

Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements:

"The people I work with cooperate to get the job done."

"I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization."

"I have enough information to do my job well."

"I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things."

"My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment."

"I like the kind of work I do."

"I have trust and confidence in my supervisor."

"I recommend my organization as a good place to work."

Respondents are also asked to rate, from "Very Good" to "Very Poor," these items:

"Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader?"

And...

"How would you rate the overall quality of work done by your work group?"

Yvonne: The eleven questions in the second section of the survey address agency goals to recruit people with relevant skills... AND to provide employees

with appropriate resources and working conditions, reasonable workloads, and opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements:

“The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.”

“My supervisor supports my need to balance work and family issues.”

“Supervisors/team leaders in my work unit provide employees with the opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills.”

“My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills.”

“The skill level in my work unit has improved in the past year.”

“I have sufficient resources (for example, people, materials, and budget) to get my job done.”

“My workload is reasonable.”

“My talents are used well in the workplace.”

“I know how my work relates to the agency's goals and priorities.”

“The work I do is important.”

And...

“Physical conditions (for example, noise level, temperature, lighting, and cleanliness in the workplace) allow employees to perform their jobs well.”

Thomas: Questions 22 through 35 of the survey cover agency policies and practices related to employee motivation and job performance... that is, the performance CULTURE.

This section includes question on rewards and recognition... performance appraisals... employee empowerment and accountability... and workplace diversity.

Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements::

“Promotions in my work unit are based on merit.”

"In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve."

"Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes."

"Employees are rewarded for providing high quality products and services to customers."

"Creativity and innovation are rewarded."

"Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs."

"Awards in my work unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs."

"In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way."

"My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance."

"Discussions with my supervisor or team leader about my performance are worthwhile."

"I am held accountable for achieving results."

"Supervisors and team leaders in my work unit are committed to a workforce representative of all segments of society."

"Policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace (for example, recruiting minorities and women, training in awareness of diversity issues, mentoring)."

And...

"Managers, supervisors, and team leaders work well with employees of different backgrounds."

Yvonne: Questions 36 through 46 of the survey ask about the effectiveness of the agency's senior managers... in motivating employees... maintaining high ethical standards... communicating organizational policies... resolving grievances... and prohibiting illegal employment practices.

Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements:

"I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders."

“In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.”

“My organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity.”

“Managers communicate the goals and priorities of the organization.”

“Managers review and evaluate the organization's progress toward meeting its goals and objectives.”

“Employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job.”

“My organization has prepared employees for potential security threats.”

“Complaints, disputes, or grievances are resolved fairly in my work unit.”

“Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated.”

“Prohibited personnel practices are not tolerated.”

And...

“I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.”

Thomas: Questions 47 through 53 of the Federal Human Capital Survey ask about whether supervisors and managers promote a workplace culture that supports staff development... and that fosters knowledge and information sharing within and across work units.

Respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements:

“Supervisors... or team leaders... provide employees with constructive suggestions to improve their job performance.”

“Supervisors... or team leaders... in my work unit support employees' development.”

“Employees have electronic access to learning and training programs readily available at their desk.”

“My training needs are assessed.”

“Managers promote communication among different work units (for example, about projects, goals, needed resources).”

“Employees in my work unit share job knowledge with each other.”

And...

“Employees use information technology (for example, intranet, shared networks) to perform their work.”

Yvonne: Questions 54 through 62 address employee satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs—including pay, job training, opportunities for advancement, recognition for work well done, and the policies and practices of senior leaders.

Responses range from “Very Satisfied” to “Very DIS-satisfied” for these items:

“How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?”

“How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?”

“How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?”

“How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?”

“How satisfied are you with your opportunity to get a better job in your organization?”

“How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?”

“Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?”

“Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your pay?”

AND... “Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization?”

Thomas: Questions 63 through 73 of the survey ask employees if they are satisfied with various employment benefits and workplace flexibilities.

Responses range from “Very Satisfied” to “Very DIS-satisfied” for these items:

“How satisfied are you with retirement benefits?”

“How satisfied are you with health insurance benefits?”

“How satisfied are you with life insurance benefits?”

“How satisfied are you with long term care insurance benefits?”

“How satisfied are you with the flexible spending account program?”

“How satisfied are you with paid vacation time?”

“How satisfied are you with paid leave for illness, including family care situations (for example, childbirth/adoption or eldercare)?”

“How satisfied are you with child care subsidies?”

“How satisfied are you with work/life programs (for example, health and wellness, employee assistance, eldercare, and support groups)?”

“How satisfied are you with telework or telecommuting?”

And...

“How satisfied are you with alternative work schedules?”

Yvonne: The final questions of the Federal Human Capital Survey cover employee demographic information, such as gender and age, and also ask about employees’ intentions to quit or retire.

Questions include:

“Where do you work? [at headquarters or in a field office?”

“What is your supervisory status?”

“Are you: male or female?”

“Are you Hispanic or non-Hispanic?”

“Are you White, Black (or African American), Native Hawaiian (or other Pacific Islander), Asian, American Indian or Alaska native, or two or more races (not Hispanic or latino)?”

“What is your age group?”

“What is your pay category or grade?”

“How long have you been with the Federal Government?”

“How long have you been with your CURRENT agency?”

“Are you considering leaving your organization within the next year, and, if so, why?”

And, finally:

“I am planning to retire... within one year, between one and three years, between three and five years, or five or more years.

Thomas: In support of the President’s Management Agenda, The Office of Personnel Management developed a Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework.

That framework consists of several human capital systems that, together, provide a consistent, comprehensive representation of human capital management:

...a strategic alignment system

... a leadership and knowledge management system

... a results-oriented performance culture system

... a talent management system

... and an accountability system.

The Federal Human Capital Survey provides ONE source of information for evaluating agency success... in THREE of the essential systems: the leadership and knowledge management system... the results-oriented performance culture system... and the talent management system...

OPM’s MEASUREMENTS for those systems include four INDEXES that are based on items in the Federal Human Capital Survey.

The leadership and knowledge management index... indicates the extent to which employees hold their leadership in high regard... both overall and on specific facets of leadership.

The results-oriented performance index... indicates the extent to which employees believe their organizational culture promotes improvement... in process, products, services, and organizational outcomes.

The talent management index... indicates the extent to which employees think the organization has the talent necessary to achieve its organizational goals.

And the job satisfaction index... indicates the extent to which employees are SATISFIED... with their JOBS and with various ASPECTS of their work.

In addition to these indexes, OPM has identified fifteen items on the survey which THEY believe are the strongest predictors of employee satisfaction... and of employee intention to leave or stay.

OPM refers to these as “impact items.”

Yvonne: Results of the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey are now available on the Internet at www.fhcs2006.opm.gov.

In addition to the published reports of government-wide and individual agency results, the results are also available tabulated by demographics.

Thomas: [*to Yvonne*] That’s my favorite section!

Yvonne: Indeed. The diversity of perspectives becomes immediately apparent.

On the Web site, you can also find information on analyzing the data... and on USING the results to improve the management of human capital.

Thomas: But that’s all we have time for in THIS edition of Diversity News. We appreciate your watching, and we hope you’ll tune in again next month.

Until then, for more frequent updates of diversity news, sign up for our free weekly e-mail news service: NewsLink. Just send an e-mail message to dmeeo@va.gov, with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line.

Yvonne: And check out our bimonthly newsletter, Diversity@Work, available as a download on our Web site or by e-mail from our office.

Also, we want to hear from YOU! If you’d like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, please e-mail us at dmeeo@va.gov with the words “Diversity News” in the subject line.

Until next time...

Both: Have a great month!